

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OPR-02

COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 /069 W

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R 102200Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7843

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN SALVADOR 1413

E.O. 11652 - GDS

TAGS: PINS, PGOV, PINT, ES

SUBJECT: STREET DEMONSTRATIONS

USCINCSO FOR POLAD

1. FOUR STREET PROTEST MARCHES REPORTEDIY TOOK PLACE IN SAN SALVADOR ON APRIL 9. THE FIRST BEGAN AT TEN IN THE MORNING, THE LAST FINISHED AT EIGHT PM. IT IS AS YET UNCLEAR WHETHER THESE WERE FOUR DISTINCT GROUPS, OR DIFFERENT MANIFESTATIONS OF THE SAME DEMONSTRATION.

2. THE MORNING MARCH, SOME THOUSAND STRONG, WAS A JOINT CAMPESINO-WORKER COLUMN WHICH PASSED THE EMBASSY TWICE, FIRST ON ITS WAY TO THE UNIVERSITY TO PICK UP STUDENT SUPPORT, AND LATER ON ITS RETURN HEADING TOWARDS THE CENTER OF THE CITY. THIS GROUP WAS ORGANIZED BY FAPU (UNIFIED POPULAR ACTION FRONT; A WORKER-CAMPESINO GROUP FOUNDED IN 1974 BY CATHOLIC PRIESTS - THE ALAS BROTHERS). THE MARCHERS HAD SEVERAL SPECIFIC PROTEST THEMES BESIDES GENERAL COMPLAINTS STEMMING FROM THE HIGH COST OF LIVING, UNEMPLOYMENT AND THE CLAIMED "FASCIST" NATURE OF THE GOES.

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3. ONE SECTION OF MARCHERS WERE THERE SPECIFICALLY TO PROTEST

ALLEGEDLY FALSE PROMISES AND ARBITRARINESS ON THE PART OF CEL (RIO LEMPA HYDROELECTRIC COMMISSION) WITH REGARD TO THE DISLOCATION AND RESETTLING OF CAMPESINOS WHOSE LAND WILL BE FLOODED BY THE CERRON GRANDE DAM. FAPU CLAIMS THE CAMPESINOS ARE BEING OFFERED SMALL, POOR QUALITY LANDS AND OVER-PRICED HOMES AT HIGH MORTGAGE RATES.

4. OTHER MARCHERS CURRIED SIGNS REFERRING TO A TWO WEEK OLD STRIKE AGAINST AN AMERICAN ROAD CONSTRUCTION FIRM, THE POTASHNICK-HARRISON COMPANY. FAPU CLAIMS THAT THE COMPANY REFUSES TO RENEGOTIATE A COLLECTIVE CONTRACT WITH ITS HEAVY MACHINERY WORKERS.

5. THIS MARCH WAS ORDERLY AND WELL ORGANIZED. PARTICIPANTS WEE OBVIOUSLY NOT PROFESSIONAL PROTESTORS, WITH THE POSSIBLE EXCEPTION OF TWENTY TO THIRTY STUDENTS WHO JOINTED IN A T THE TAIL END WHEN THE MARCHERS MOVED THROUGH UES CAMPUS. THIS STUDENT GROUP, CARRYING A BANNER IDENTIFYING THEMSELVES AS MEMBERS OF FUERSA (SALVADOR ALLENDE REVOLUTIONARY STUDENT FRONT - AN ULTRA-LEFT STUDENT GROUP AT UES WHICH IS A GROWING RIVAL TF THE MORE MODERATE PCS-CONTROLLED FAU, THE UNIVERSITY ACTION FRONT), WAS THE ONLY ELEMENT THAT SEEMED PRONE TO POSSIBLE VIOLENCE.

6. LITTLE INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE ON THE THREE OTHER REPORTED WEMONSTRATIONS BEYOND A DESCRIPTION OBTAINED BY DATT OF ROUGH HANDLING BY ONE OF THE MARCH GROUPS OF THE ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF COL. RODRIGUEZ. THE COLONEL, HURRYING TO THE CASA PRESIDENCIAL TO ATTEND A MEETING CALLED BY PRESIDENT TO DISCUSS THE DEMONSTRATIONS

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HAD TO PASS THROUGH ONE PARADE. BEFORE HE COULD EMERGE, THE WINDSHIELD OF HIS JEEP WAS BROKEN, THE HOOD WAS REMOVED, AND HE RECEIVED EXTENSIVE OBSCENE AND THREATENING VERBAL ABUSE.

7. COMMENT - THESE PROTESTS - A RELATIVELY UNIQUE EVENT SINCE WORKERS, CAMPESINOS AND UNIVERSITY STUDENTS SELDOM MARCH TOGETHER - COULD BE A HARBINGER OF WHAT SOME OBSERVERS BELIEVE THE NEXT WEEKS MIGHT BRING, DEMONSTRATIONS AND PROTESTS CULMINATING IN THE CELEBRATIONS OF MAY DAY. DATT SOURCES REPORT INDICATIONS THAT SOME MILITARY OFFICERS FEAR SERIOUS DISTURBANCES ON MAY DAY. THIS APPREHENSION IS NOT UNCOMMON BEFORE THE NNUAL MAY 1 PARADE. THIS YEAR, THE FEELINGS OF APPREHENSION ARE EVEN STRONGER, WITH
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THE POSSIBILITY OF FURTHER RUMOR AT THE UNIVERSITY SENDING THE STUDENTS INTO THE STREETS, MAY WAGE EARNERS SUFFERING FROM THE INFLATIONARY COST OF LIVING SQUEEZE AND PERSISTENT UNEMPLOYMENT, AND THE SEEMING INABILITY OF THE GOVERNMENT TO MAKE HEADWAY IN ALLEVIATING THESE PROBLEMS. NOTWITHSTANDING SUCH TENSIONS, OUR BEST ESTIMATE IS THAT THE GOES DOES NOT ANTICIPATE, NOR ARE THE INGREDIENTS PRESENT FOR, A VIOLENT CONFRONTATION IN THE STREETS WITH ONE OR MORE THE DISSIDENT

SECTORS. THE LABOR MINISTER TOLD A POLOFF THAT NEITHER HE NOR
THE GOES EXPECT, NOR ARE TAKING PRECUATIONARY ACTIONS
AGAINST, ANYTHING UNTOWARD ON MAY DAY. THE USUAL PARADE WILL
PASS THROUGH THE OLD PART OF THE CITY, EMOTIONAL SPEECHES WILL
BE MADE, AND EVERYONE WILL GO HOME WITH THE SALYSFACTION
OF TOVING LET OFF STEAM. IF EVENTS SHOULD LEAD TO STREET
CONFONTATIONS, THE GOES HAS THE MEANS AND THE WILL TO DEAL
WITH ANY PUBLIC DISTURBANCE THAT MIGHT OCCUR.
CAMPBELL

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